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FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3896
INFO RUEHKK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NSC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JERUSALEM 000158

SIPDIS

NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE AND PPD, NSC FOR
ABRAMS/PASCUAL/RAMCHAND, M FOR DIRECTOR GENERAL THOMAS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/19/2019
TAGS: [AFSN](#) [KWBG](#) [MOPS](#) [PHUM](#) [PREF](#) [PTER](#) [KPAO](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: GAZANS RESILIENT IN REBUILDING THEIR SHATTERED
LIVES

REF: A. JERUSALEM 132
[1](#)B. JERUSALEM 141

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. With a cease-fire in Gaza, two Gazans, whose stories Post tracked throughout the 22 days of fighting, are picking up the pieces of their lives and their homes, focusing on the welfare of their families above all else, and getting ready to go back to school. In telcons with PD Offs, PD FSN Essam Mattar and American Corner Gaza Director Awni Karzon reflected resilience and a practicality about their plights -- finding housing, buying food, and preparing for school exams. End Summary.

GOODS AVAILABLE; BAKERIES AND BNKS REOPEN
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[1](#)2. (C) In daily telcons with PD Offs, PD FN Essam Mattar and American Corner Gaza Director Awni Karzon shared their stories of survival throughout the 22 days of IDF operations in Gaza (refels). With a cease-fire in place, both Mattar and Karzon have begun trying to create some sense of normalcy for their families. In telcons on January 19, both said food, water, and other goods are available in the local markets in Gaza City, and that bakeries had reopened.

[1](#)3. (C) Karzon said, prices are still high. He also wondered whether humanitarian aid is being pilfered and resold in the shops, since he has seen several items that have not been available in Gaza for months, including long-life milk and yogurt. Karzon and Mattar confirmed that banks have reopened but are limiting withdrawals. Karzon remarked that a PA employee can withdraw only up to 500 shekels of their salaries.

AMCORNER DIRECTOR FEARS NEW DANGERS WITH EASE FIRE
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[1](#)4. (C) After sheltering with a friend for 18 days (ref A), Karzon returned with his family to his partially destroyed apartment in Tel al-Hawa on January 19. Karzon reported to PD Off that the master bedroom of his apartment is still habitable and the kitchen is functional, though the rest of the apartment is heavily damaged. The building lacks running water, as the plumbing was damaged by bombing, and may not be structurally sound. Even so, he believes, it is the best place for him and his family now. With no way to secure his apartment, Karzon also worries about looting of what remains of his possessions.

[1](#)5. (C) Karzon expressed concern about the possibility for Hamas reprisals against pro-atah loyalists like himself, but he is determined to stay in Gaza for now. Al Azhar University, where Karzon is a professor, reopened January 20 for cleaning and security sweeps, and Karzon needs to prepare

to conduct and grade university exams over the next month. Meanwhile, his wife is anxious to get settled in what is left of their home so she can begin her preparing for her own M.A. exams in February. Karzon said Gaza is his home and he will always return here, but after the events of the last three weeks, he is seeking a break and hopes to find an academic fellowship outside Gaza. (NOTE: Post applied on Karzon's behalf to the Scholar Rescue Fund, which seeks to place at-risk scholars with U.S. universities for up to one year. End note.)

CONGEN FSN FOCUSES ON THE FUTURE
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¶6. (C) Following his flight from his bombed-out home (ref B), Mattar finally found refuge for his family in Post's PD Office in Gaza, where he and his family remain as of January ¶20. Though the office building has no running water, Mattar counts himself lucky to have found any shelter for his family. His wife and one of his daughters were injured in the blast that destroyed their home, but received medical treatment and were released from hospital immediately. Mattar told PD Chief that his home can be replaced, his family cannot.

¶7. (C) Returning to his apartment on January 19, Mattar found that his home is now little more than an uninhabitable, burned-out husk. Displaying an irrepressible optimism, Mattar told PD Chief he hopes to rebuild. "Most walls are still standing, at least," he said. In the meantime, Mattar has already been out looking for an apartment to rent. They are scarce though, according to Mattar, and prices have

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risen, making them unaffordable for many homeless Gazans, especially those in UNRWA shelters. (NOTE: Post estimates Mattar's total losses, including rebuilding/replacing his apartment and nearly all his family's possessions, at USD 60,000 and is preparing a request for assistance for Mattar through the FSN Relief Fund. End Note.)

¶8. (C) For now, Mattar is focused on getting his family settled as quickly as possible, noting that he has heard Gazan schools will reopen on January 24. He wants his family in a temporary home, not camped out in the office, so his children can focus on returning to their studies. "After all," he told PD Chief, "they have to prepare for their exams in two weeks."

WALLES